

Week Three: The Manners of Visiting

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KEEPING APPOINTMENTS, DELAYS AND CANCELLATION

- [1] Surat Al-Mai'da: 1: Allah called upon the believers 'O' you the Believers, fulfill your promises.'
- [2] In Surat Maryam Allah also praised Prophet Ismail may peace be upon him 'He was true to his promise. He was a Messenger and a Prophet.'
- [3] To keep an appointment is vital to our lives
- [4] Try utmost to keep this appointment – It is the right of the other person
- [5] Do not mar your image and personality by failing to keep an appointment.
- [6] The Prophet gave an appointment to one of his companions. The companion came three days later. The Prophet gently reprimanded him 'You have caused me some trouble. I have been waiting expecting you since three days.'
- [7] Today, fast and reliable communication means are available everywhere. As soon as you realize you will not be able to keep an appointment, you should inform the other parties to enable them to utilize their time.
- [8] Never make a promise while you do not intend to keep it or fulfil it. This is forbidden as it falls within lying and hypocrisy.
- [9] Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that the Prophet said: 'Three traits single out hypocrites, even if he prayed and/or fast and claimed to be Muslim: If he talks, he lies. If he promises, he does not keep it. If he is entrusted, he betrays the trust.'
- Imam Ghazali in Al-Ihya said that this Hadith fits those who promise while intending not to fulfil it, or those who, without excuse, decide later not to fulfil a promise. Those who promise but could not fulfil, their promise due to a proper excuse are not hypocrites. But we should be careful not to create excuses that are not valid. Allah knows our inner thoughts and intentions.

NOTES

DECLINING A VISIT

[1] If you visit friends with or without an appointment and they apologize for not being able to receive you, accept their apology without ill-feeling.

[2] It is perfectly all right for them to ask to be excused.

[3] The follower (Tabi'ee) Qatada bin Di'ama Al-Sadüsy said: 'Do not hang around at the door of those who declined your visit. Accept their reason, leave to attend your business, and let them attend their own business.'

[4] Do not ask for reason or explanations.

[5] Imam Malik used to say: 'Not all people can disclose their reasons.'

[6] Imam Al-Tabari in his Tafseer (18:113) reported that a man of Muhajirin said: 'All my life, I wanted to practice this Sura 'If you are told to turn back then do so, it is much better for you' but I could not. I was hoping I will seek permission to visit a brother and he will tell me: Go back! I gladly will go back fulfilling this directive to Allah.

[7] This particular etiquette is very important in order to remove any ill-feelings that could linger because of declining of a visit.

[8] Allah SWT said, 'If you are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity.'

NOTES

CONTROL YOUR EYES

[1] When asking permission to enter a home, avoid glancing unnecessarily at its interior or beyond the guests' quarters.

[2] Abu Dawood and Tabarani explained that Sa'd bin 'Ubada (RA) said: 'A man came and stood at the door of the Prophet (PBUH) asking permission while facing the door. The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Turn this way,' turning him away and ordering him to move farther from the door, saying, 'Asking permission is prescribed to prevent intrusion.' '

[3] Bukhari also explained in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad that Thawban (RA) recounted that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'A person should not look inside a house before getting permission, if you do [look inside before asking permission] , you have already entered [or trespassed].'

[4] Al- Bukhari also stated in Al-Adab Al-Mufrad and Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmidhi narrated by Abu Huraira who said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'If the sight leaps, permission should be denied.'

[5] Al-Bukhari narrated that 'Ammar bin Sa'id Al-Tujiby stated that Omar bin Al-Khatib said: 'Whoever fills his eyes with the sight of the interior of a house before being permitted is a wrong doer.'

[6] Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others narrated that Sahl bin Sa'd (RA) said that a man peeked through a hole into the room of the Prophet (PBUH) while he was scratching his head with a small pitch fork.

When The Prophet saw the intruder, he told him: 'Had I known you were looking I would have poked your eye! Asking permission is prescribed to prevent intrusion.'

NOTES

REMOVING YOUR SHOES

[1] When entering the house of your host, or even your home, be gentle as you enter or leave.

[2] Lower your eyes and your voice.

[3] Take off your shoes unless your host asks you to keep them on.

[4] Take off your shoes at an appropriate spot, and set them in an orderly fashion.

[5] It was noted by Muslim and others that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'When you put your shoes on, start with the right shoe. When taking your shoes off start with the left one. The right shoe is the first to be put on and the last to be taken off.'

[6] Before entering your house or that of your brethren, inspect your shoes. If they are dirty, remove them or wipe the shoes against the ground.

NOTES

CHOOSING A SEAT

[1] Sit where asked to by your host. Do not argue with your hosts about the place where they wish you to sit.

[2] Ibn Kathir narrated in Al-Bidayah wa Al-Nihayah that the honoured companion 'Adi bin Hatam Al Tay converted to Islam and came to Madina to see the Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet honoured Hatam by seating him on a cushion, while he himself sat on the floor. 'Adi said: '...then the Prophet took me along and upon reaching his house, he took a leather cushion filled with palm fiber and threw it on the floor. 'Sit on this,' he said. 'No, you sit on it,' I answered. The Prophet insisted, 'No you.' So I sat on it while the Prophet sat on the floor.' '

[3] Kharija bin Ziada visited Ibn Sireen. He found Ibn Sireen sitting on a cushion on the floor and wanted to also sit on a cushion, saying, 'I am content as you are.' Ibn Sireen replied: 'In my home, I will not be content until I provide you with what I am usually comfortable with. Sit where you are asked to sit.'

[4] Do not sit in the patron's seat unless he invites you to it.

In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'No person shall lead another in prayer while the first is at the latter's house. No person shall sit, uninvited, at the favourite seat of the patron of the house.'

[5] If it happened that you arrived early and your host, out of kindness, directed you to sit at the most prominent seat, be prepared to stand up and give this seat to the elder, the notable, or the scholar when they arrive after you since they are more deserving of this seat.

[6] If you refuse to give your seat to those who are considered more deserving of it by those around you, this will only indicate your lack of manners and common sense. You will become one of those referred to by the Prophet, when he said, 'Those who do not respect our elders do not belong to us.'

[7] If you happened to sit in the second best place and a notable person entered the room, you should give up your seat to that person. To be respectful of our elders is evidence of your good manners and social sense.

Imam Muslim reported that the Prophet said, when organizing prayers, 'The wisest of you and the elders should stand next to me, then those below them, then those below them.'

[8] In the gathering, a prominent person may call upon you to discuss a matter, or to answer a query, or to give you an advice. If you sat beside him or near him, it is desirable that you return to your previous seat once the matter is concluded unless that person or other notables insist that you remain at your new seat.

[9] You could be called to a gathering where you are the youngest. In such cases, do not sit before you are invited to do so.

NOTES

A VISITOR IS NOT AN INSPECTOR

[1] When you enter a home, whether as a visitor or an overnight guest, do not closely examine its contents as an inspector would.

[2] Do not open closed closets, or boxes. Do not inspect a wallet, a package, or a covered object.

[3] Imam Muhasibi in Risalat Al-Mustershidin said: 'The duty of sight is to preclude forbidden sights and not to try to see what has been hidden or covered. Dawood Al-Ta'i said 'I was told we will be accountable for our minor gazes as we are accountable for minor deeds.'

[4] The Arabic poet Miskin Al-Darimi said:

'My neighbor should not worry if his door is not closed.'

NOTES

TIMING YOUR VISIT

[1] Choose an appropriate time for your visit.

[2] Do not visit at inconvenient times such as mealtime, or when people are sleeping, resting, or relaxing.

[3] The length of the visit should be in accord with how well you know the hosts, as well as their circumstances and conditions.

[4] Do not overstay your welcome by making your visit too long or burdensome.

[5] Imam Al-Nawawi said in the book of Al-Azkar: 'It is strongly recommended for Muslims to visit the pious people, the brethren, the neighbours, friends and relatives, and to be generous, kind, and obliging to them. However, the extent of the visit varies according to the host's circumstances. The visit ought to be conducted in a pleasant manner and at convenient times. There are numerous sayings and traditions in this regard.'

NOTES

GREETING

[1] If you enter a room, greet everyone inside.

[2] If you want to shake hands with those present, start with the most eminent, the most knowledgeable, the most pious, the oldest or those who have similar Islamic distinctions.

Do not overlook the most distinguished or most eminent and start with the first person on your right.

If you cannot decide who is the most reputable, or if those present happen to be of comparable status, then start with the elderly, for they are easier to recognize.

[3] Al-Bukhari explained that the Prophet said, 'The elder! The elder!' In another version he said, 'The elderly come first.'

'Abu Yalla and Al-Tabarany in Al-Awsat reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Start with the elderly, or , he said, 'with the notables.'

NOTES

SITTING BETWEEN TWO PERSONS

[1] If you enter a room do not sit between two persons. Instead, sit on their left or right side.

[2] Abu Dawood reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'No one is to sit between two people without their permission.'

[3] Sometimes two persons will be kind enough to favour you by making room for you to sit between them. Do not sit crossedlegged to crowd them out.

A sage said: 'Two persons are considered immoderate: a person to whom you give advice and he arrogantly holds it in contempt against you, and a person who is favoured with a seat in a room and he sits crossed-legged.'

[4] If you are seated between two people, do not eavesdrop and listen to what they say, lest their conversation be a confidential or private matter.

Al-Bukhari reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: 'Whoever listens to people's conversation against their wishes, will be punished by liquid lead being poured down their ears on the day of Judgment.'

[5] You should seek to benefit from the company and wisdom of the elders who are described as 'a fruit at the end of the season.'

Be keen to attend the gatherings of the elders whether scholars, pious persons, nobles, or relatives. Soon you may lament their departure and your loss.

[6] It is an inappropriate Muslim manner to whisper to someone sitting next to you if you are in a group of three people.

The Messenger (PBUH) hated this. Imam Malik and Abu Dawood reported that he said: 'No two shall exchange whispers in the presence of a third person.' That the Prophet used 'No two...' in an assertive negative form, indicates that such a mistake is not only inappropriate but an unimaginable and instinctively despicable.

'Abdullah Bin Omar was asked, 'What if they were four?' 'Then it does not matter,' he answered, meaning it is not irritating then to whisper or to mutter. If a friend entrusted you with a secret, do not betray him or her. Do not tell it even to your best friend or closest relative.

NOTES
